

Editor's Note: Local Interest

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Contact: John R. Kemp

REGENTS TO AWARD TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM GRANTS TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

BATON ROUGE -- The Louisiana Board of Regents for postsecondary education is scheduled tomorrow (June 28) to award grants to 13 public and six private colleges and universities totaling over \$1 million to redesign teacher education programs in the state.

These grants will be underwritten by a three-year, \$3.4 million U.S. Department of Education Title II grant to the state and matching funds from the Board of Regents' Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning.

"This is an outstanding program," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "Louisiana is making significant progress in redesigning and rethinking how we recruit, train and retain our future classroom teachers. Our initiatives in accountability and teacher education preparation should put Louisiana out ahead of other states in classroom and teacher training reforms."

Public universities receiving grants are Grambling State University, Louisiana State University and A&M College, LSU-Shreveport, Louisiana Tech University, McNeese State University, Nicholls State University, Northwestern State University, Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Southern University-New Orleans, Southeastern Louisiana University, University of Louisiana-Lafayette, University of Louisiana-Monroe, and University of New Orleans.

Private colleges and universities include Centenary College, Dillard University, Loyola University, Louisiana College, Our Lady of Holy Cross College and Xavier University.

Coordinating the U.S. Department of Education's Title II grant program for the Board of Regents is Jeanne Burns, the Regents associate commissioner for academic affairs. "This initiative," she said, "is providing support for our universities, school districts and communities to work together to critically examine what new teachers need to know to better prepare our students from kindergarten through high school."

Federal funding for this program resulted from a June 2000 proposal entitled *Louisiana QUEST: Quality Education for Student and Teachers* that was submitted to U.S. Department of Education's Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Program by the Regents, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the governor's office and the Council for a Better Louisiana. The proposal was an effort to secure funding for colleges and universities and local school districts to redesign teacher preparation programs consistent with the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality. In August 2000, the state was notified that it had received \$3.4 million over three years to support the state's program.

The primary purpose of the *Louisiana QUEST* initiative is to increase the academic performance of PK-16+ students by improving existing efforts to recruit, prepare and retain high quality PK-12 teachers. This initiative required universities, districts, and communities to work collaboratively to create more authentic partnerships, aggressively recruit more teachers into the teaching profession, redesign existing teacher preparation programs to address critical needs in

schools, and provide new teachers with the necessary support to remain within the teaching profession.

During the grant's first year, \$555,000 was awarded to universities in the form of University-District Redesign Subgrants through the federal Title II funds. In addition, universities provided \$138,750 in matching funds to support the subgrant activities. The primary focus of the subgrants for year one was to identify activities that would result in: (1) PK-16+ Councils being formed to identify strategies for universities and schools to meet growth targets for state accountability systems; 2) PK-16+ coordinators spearheading PK-16+ partnerships and redesign planning activities for new alternate and traditional certification programs; and 3) universities creating the technology infrastructure and professional development needed by faculty to prepare new teachers to successfully integrate technology into the curriculum.

This year, \$730,000 is being made available to universities through this federal grant and \$275,000 in state funds through the Board of Regents' Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning for another cycle of subgrants. In addition, participating universities will provide an additional \$487,500 in matching funds.

Colleges and universities receiving this year's grants will redesign their teacher preparation curriculum, initiate professional training programs for faculty to help implement the new redesigned curricula, implement collaborative plans to create professional development schools for teachers, develop collaborative plans to offer on-going support for all new teachers, redesign principal preparation programs, and create the technology infrastructure to prepare new teachers to successfully integrate technology into the curriculum.

To help recruit new teachers into the profession, the grant program encourages each university to employ strategies such as the early identification and advising (beginning in the freshman year) of students interested in teaching, to recruit outstanding students in shortage areas such as mathematics and science, and to promote and support the new high school teacher cadet programs.

"These grants and new initiatives are helping our colleges and universities focus on the job that needs to be done," Savoie said. "Our colleges of education have responded to these challenges. I don't believe that higher education has a more serious responsibility than that of providing every child in Louisiana access to a competent, caring and qualified teacher. Ultimately, these efforts will pay off for the children of our state. Today, this is one of our highest priorities."

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